

IN THE CLAIMS:

1 - 18 (Cancelled)

19. (Previously amended) A modular patient care system, comprising:

a plurality of modules including a first module and a second module, said second module comprising a first portion grippable by a user, said second module being configured and dimensioned so as to be capable of being held by a single hand of the user by gripping said first portion;

a hinge connector pair configured and dimensioned to allow hingeable engagement of said second module to said first module near a first end of said second module;

S2
a latch mechanism for securing said second module to said first module near a second end of said second module, said latch mechanism comprising a first part connected to said first module and a second part connected to said second module near said second end, said second part being capable of springably securing to said first part when forced into said first part;

means for releasing said second part from said first part;

a guide mechanism separate from said hinge connector pair and said latch mechanism and located therebetween, said guide mechanism for discouraging off-axis engagement of said first and second modules and for providing mechanical stability for said first and second modules when engaged;

wherein

said means for releasing is spaced away from said first portion of said second module a distance sufficient to prevent a hand gripping said first portion from also activating said releasing means;

whereby

said second module is capable of being structurally engaged to said first module in a one-handed, single step operation, and whereby an at least two-step or two-handed operation is required to structurally disengage said second module from said first module.

20. (Original) The modular patient care system of claim 19, said latch mechanism further comprising a latch tongue on one of said first or second parts and a catch feature on the other of said first or second parts for catching and engaging said latch tongue, wherein said releasing means is configured and dimensioned to release said latch tongue from said catch feature upon actuation.

3 21. (Original) The modular patient care system of claim *19*, said hinge connector pair comprising:

a male hinge connector on either of said first or second modules, said male hinge connector having a first and second set of electrical contacts formed thereon; and

a female hinge connector on the other of said first or second modules for hingeably engaging said male hinge connector, said female hinge connector having a third and fourth set of electrical contacts formed thereon configured and dimensioned to connect to said first and second set of electrical contacts, respectively, upon hingeable engagement of said hinge connector pair;

whereby said first and second modules become electrically engaged upon becoming structurally engaged.

32 22. (Original) The modular patient care system of claim *21*, wherein said electrical contacts are configured and dimensioned such that said first and third sets of electrical contacts connect before said second and fourth sets of electrical contacts connect during engagement of said first and second modules, and such that said first and third sets of electrical contacts disconnect after said second and fourth sets of electrical contacts disconnect during disengagement of said first and second modules.

23 23. (Original) The modular patient care system of claim *20*, further comprising a fastener for affixing said latch tongue within said catch feature, said fastener being configured and dimensioned such that a special fastener tool is required to release said fastener from said latch tongue,

whereby when said fastener has affixed said latch tongue, said first and second modules remain permanently engaged until said fastener is released from said latch tongue using said special fastener tool.

6 24. (Original) The modular patient care system of claim *19*, said modules each having a front, a back, and sides, said first and second modules defining a pair when engaged, said guide mechanism comprising:

a male elevation feature protruding from one of said first or second modules;

a female recess feature in the other of said first or second modules;

wherein said male elevation feature is chamfered and said female recess feature is shaped for corresponding lead-in to provide guidance of said modules during engagement.

7 25. (Original) The modular patient care system of claim 20, said latch tongue and said catch feature being configured and dimensioned to provide for springable engagement of said latch tongue into said catch feature sufficient to cause a mechanical resonance at said first portion detectable by the user, whereby tactile feedback is provided to the user upon completion of the engagement of said first and second modules.

8 26. (Original) The modular patient care system of claim 21, said first and second modules defining a pair when engaged, said modular patient care system further comprising a cover coupled to said male or female hinge connectors for covering said connector when not in use, said cover being hingeably adjustable with respect to said connector, wherein said cover is configured and dimensioned to be partially compressed upon engagement of said first and second modules to provide cushion and prevent rattling of said pair.

9 27. (Original) The modular patient care system of claim 21, said first module being a main interface module for providing an interface between the system and the user, said second module being a functional module for providing patient therapies or monitoring, said first and second modules each comprising a face, a first surface, and a second surface opposite said first surface,

wherein said hinge connector pair, said latch mechanism, and said guide means are formed at said second surface of said first module and said first surface of said second module, and

wherein said second surface of said second module is substantially identical to said first surface of said first module;

whereby said first and second modules are capable of being electrically and structurally engaged by hingeably coupling said first surface of said second module to said second surface of said first module, and

whereby said first and second modules are also capable of being electrically and structurally engaged by hingeably coupling said second surface of said second module to said first surface of said first module.

10 28. (New) The modular patient care system of claim 27, wherein said functional module includes a SELECT key communicating with the interface module, and wherein depression of said SELECT key selects the functional module and initiates configuration of the interface module as a user interface for the selected functional module.